

*Rockefeller
Book*

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June 6, 1955

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Psychological Aspects of Foreign Policy.

1. This paper does not leave the reader with a very clear picture of the role of psychology in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. It contains, however, quite a few perceptive remarks which are worth remembering.

2. In the first place, the following definition: "A foreign policy which is psychologically sound attempts to maximize the desirable effects of action and minimize the undesirable effects in such ways as the following: By taking account of the social and psychological characteristics of politically significant groups abroad; by considering questions of optimum timing and surprise in the light of these characteristics; by paying attention to the possibility of exploiting initial successes; or by permitting or not permitting another power to save face".

3. The paper disposes effectively of two misconceptions about the use of psychology in foreign affairs.⁽¹⁾ When it is recognized that policy's role is to influence foreign people's behavior, it is certainly not "dishonorable to use what we know about the social or psychological characteristics of people in order to influence this behavior." To neglect to use this knowledge would obviously be self-defeating. The proper show of consideration for the feelings and the national pride of others is nothing but a specific case of the "psychological use of foreign policy".⁽²⁾ As a second point, manipulation of the psychological predispositions of a foreign power is no substitute for other types of political action. "The argument has been advanced in some quarters that if we made a greater effort to follow the psychological approach we could spend less on armaments and economic assistance. This would be something like telling an executive in an automobile factory that if he spent more on advertising and public relations he would be able to cut down on production". ... "Development of expertise in dealing with the psychological aspects of policy has been delayed by exaggerated expectations of what can be accomplished in this matter".

4. The main development of the paper, however, bears less on the use of psychology in policy making than on the role of international communication. Although emphasis is placed on the use of mass media, there are some worthwhile remarks about the need of reaching not "the most people", but "the right ones and at the right time", and the importance for public relations officers to establish friendly relations with influential individuals in the communications field rather than to maximize the output of press releases.

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5. The analysis of the role of the public relations specialists in the formulation of policies seems to be incomplete. This, as well as other shortcomings of this paper, may be due to the fact that the authors have paid more attention to the technical aspect of communications than to the fact that political action aims primarily at influencing the will of other people and is by definition psychological.

6. The last paragraph of the paper deserves quotation:

"Of one thing we may be certain. The rapid increase in the destructiveness of available weapons will not overshadow their psychological aspect. Rather, the role which hope, fear, despair, expectations regarding the future, and other forces within individuals and societies, play in influencing political behavior will tend to increase at the same time that man's mastery of destructive power increases. Ability to command even more massive forces in the external physical environment does not dwarf the importance of the psychological aspect of foreign policy, but presents us with new and more challenging problems in the understanding of man's behavior.

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